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# THE JAPANESE VIEW OF THE SITUATION IN CHINA.

BY A JAPANESE DIPLOMAT.

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IN view of the grave situation in China, which is growing daily more serious, it may not be superfluous to lay before the reading public an opinion regarding the problem from the Japanese point of view.

The present Chinese question, with which nearly all the great Powers are confronted, is not only a question of international politics, but it is also one of the most important social problems in the world. From what we can gather in regard to the motive of the so-called Boxers' rising, it seems that the object they had in view was originally a secret conspiracy directed against the Christian element in their country. Whether the rising was originally encouraged by any influence in the Imperial Court or among the administrative officials is not at all clear. I am rather inclined to think that the disturbance is the outbreak of a popular feeling of dissatisfaction, which has been gradually increasing, against foreigners among all classes of the Chinese, as the result of friction between Occidental and Oriental elements in the vast Empire of China.

In China, as in other countries in the Far East, foreigners and Christians are almost always put on the same level. A great number of foreigners are European or American missionaries, and practically the entire foreign population is Christian. The good work that has been done in China by these exponents of the Gospel cannot be disputed, but the lower grades of the populace, even when they have received a little education, do not always consider the bright and beneficial side of the missionary work. They often misunderstand the real object of the missionaries, who are in many instances looked upon as the pioneers of the "aggressive

foreign devils." Frequently their hereditary notion about religion is hurt by the teachings of the Gospel which are by no means consistent with the popular conception of religion. Besides, the indescribable difficulties of acquiring the national language cause the missionaries to be easily misunderstood by the people. There is no doubt that there have been a great many converts among the Chinese, but at the same time the susceptibilities of a large portion of the population have been hurt by the work of the missionaries.

Fault may be found with the missionaries for the way in which they carry out their work, but the magnitude of the difficulties they have to contend with, in the execution of their task, is beyond dispute.

The anti-Christian movement has thus been engendered; but, as I have already mentioned, "anti-Christian" means practically "anti-foreign." Thus the first anti-Christian movement began to be directed against foreigners on an immense scale. The first symptom of the anti-foreign rising was to be observed in the month of April last. I often hear sceptical people say that a certain Power is acting behind the Chinese Court, and that that Power, through the influence of the Court, had encouraged the movement so that an opportunity might arise of which it wished to take advantage. However, so far as my knowledge of the question goes, there is absolutely nothing to warrant this supposition.

The rising is, therefore, more of a social than of a political character. I think I am fairly right when I say that the leaders of the "I-Ho-Chuan" consider it their duty to their country to rid China of the Christians aid consequently of all foreigners.

Moreover, the recent demands for "lease" of their "sphere of influence" by several Powers, and the subsequent grant of these demands by the Chinese Government, gave a splendid pretext for this anti-foreign movement. This establishment of foreign Powers within the Chinese Empire, under the name of "spheres of influence," together with the popular imagination that the missionaries are the pioneers of the "aggressive foreign devils," went a long way to show the Chinese that the expulsion of foreigners from the shores of the Middle Kingdom was a highly patriotic deed to accomplish.

Besides being of a social character, the movement thus assumed the color of a political problem. In this connection I may further mention that there is also a large portion of the people

who are not at all satisfied with being governed by the present Manchu dynasty. Although it is not wholly consistent with the progress of the movement as it has been made known to the public so far, I am almost certain that these malcontents have joined hands with the rebels. It seems to me very likely that for the present they are playing the game together with the "Boxers" under the patriotic pretext of expelling the "enemies of the country," in the hope that some day there might arise a chance for them to turn against the present ruling dynasty. There are not always wanting shrewd opportunists ready to fish in troubled waters. Still, for the purpose of this article, this supposition may be put aside.

It would be a great injustice to the Chinese were one to assume that the mistaken idea of patriots of expelling foreigners is also shared by the enlightened portion of the population; but, at all events, it seems almost certain, to the great regret of the civilized world, that the "Boxer" movement is backed by the Imperial Court and also by the actual government, the principal members of which have recently been replaced by the bigoted Conservatives, notorious for their anti-foreign feeling. Although I am far from saying that there exists a state of war between China on the one hand and the great Powers on the other, the progress of events indicates that the Chinese authorities are defying the strength of the Powers, and that they are determined to expel the "foreign invaders." Instances in proof of this are not wanting. The Chinese regular troops resisted by force the advance of the allied forces, and it has been reported that a secret edict of the Empress Dowager ordered the dispatch of the Tientsin garrison to Taku to check the landing of the foreign troops. Whatever may be the attitude of the Peking Government toward the "Boxer" movement, the fact remains that they are entirely incapable of suppressing the disturbances, if they do not actually encourage them.

The Powers whose interests are threatened cannot remain mere lookers-on. Their representatives at Peking and their subjects are threatened with wholesale massacre. Their commerce is brought to a complete standstill. And all these regrettable incidents are to a very great extent due to ignorance of the outer world on the part of the Chinese. They must, therefore, be enlightened, they must be educated, and they must be punished for their ignorance and folly. The duty of enlightening a population of

400,000,000 souls rests entirely with the governments of the Powers concerned. The work is that of civilization, and that is why I described this question as one of the most momentous social problems in the world.

Ignorance must be swept away and the mischief punished, but to attain the object in view a certain amount of force must be employed. What would be the requisite amount of force largely depends upon the future progress of the disturbances. Supposing that the people of North China were to join hands with those of the South, then it would mean a tremendous war, a war against an immense and ancient Empire, with its population of some 400,000,000 souls, who would fly to arms to the cry of "Expulsion of all foreigners."

At the commencement of the present crisis it was hoped that the rising might be localized, but now it is too late, and there is a fear that the above supposition may be realized.

In addition to the difficulty of suppressing the disturbances, more difficult questions will arise after the "Boxers" have been reduced to submission. It is certain that these questions will sooner or later be submitted for solution. What, then, will those questions be? In the first place, there will be the problem about the future relations of China with the other Powers. The question in regard to the reorganization of the naval and military system will be another important point. A guarantee against the recurrence of such events as the present disturbance will surely be demanded by the Powers. Compensation for the damage done by the mobs to the lives and properties of the different Powers must also be settled. These will be the immediate questions that will follow the suppression of the present disturbances; and beyond that no one knows what will be the probable outcome of the "Chinese Crisis."

In dealing with these questions, let us first consider the ultimate objects which the Powers are making strenuous efforts to attain. China, with its already immense and still rapidly increasing population, affords to the whole world the most promising market for the future. The soil is generally fertile and the climate salubrious. Owing to the extremely conservative character of the people, they have persistently opposed the introduction of modern appliances of civilization, and the result is that they are uneducated and the resources of the country are undeveloped. It

is sad to see a vast Empire like China remaining far behind other countries in the way of national development. This fact is a great misfortune to China, first of all, and to the world at large it is a source of extreme danger, and this danger has now actually arisen.

In the history of the world there was a time when events were actuated by human sentiment, chiefly by differences of race and of religion. But nowadays diplomacy is entirely guided by material interests, and there is a growing tendency to allow commercial interests to play the first part in influencing diplomacy. In the days when almost all the nations of the world were governed by all powerful monarchs, international questions, as well as internal affairs, were frequently influenced by the mere caprice of the rulers. But those ages of despotism have passed away, and in the present generation public opinion or the voice of the people governs everything. Then, what is public opinion? It is nothing short of the manifestation of public and national interests. If this statement is correct, and if national politics are governed by the national interests of the country, international problems must also be mainly influenced by the material interests of each of the nations concerned, and not only by their sentiments. I make especial mention of this because the present Chinese question concerns several countries of different races and religions, and also because the question should not be treated from the religious and racial point of view. The question is one of humanity and affects the interest of almost all the great Powers on the face of the globe. Of all the material interests of a nation, the commercial is the most important. The age of agriculture is gone by, and in the present age commerce is in its prime, backed by various branches of industry; this is the commercial era, and the aim of every country is directed toward the development of its commerce. Development of commerce means progress of civilization, and commerce must go hand in hand with peace.

China is a great commercial country; or, at least, the Chinese have a splendid capacity for becoming the ablest merchants in the world. Chinese merchants have an immense trading capital at their disposal; their commercial institutions and banking systems are perfect; and, above all, their honesty, which is the best policy in commerce, is indisputable. These remarks may appear rather strange to the public, but persons who know the Chinese well are agreed on these points. The social condition of China is, perhaps,

one of the most mysterious phenomena in the world. It is almost hopeless for "Outlanders" to understand thoroughly the manners and customs of China. Before one can speak Chinese, a person must learn by heart a vast number of complicated Chinese characters, to acquire which the whole of a man's life would hardly suffice. Even foreign merchants who have lived in that country a number of years are obliged to have recourse to Chinese interpreters or the "Compradors;" there are very few foreign merchants who really understand the business transactions carried on among the Chinese. As it is necessary to educate and enlighten the general Chinese public, to maintain peace and order among them, it is also desirable that outsiders should have a more familiar acquaintance with China. I said that China is a commercial nation, but this remark needs some explanation. Although in China it appears that the gap between the upper and lower classes is great, and that there are several castes of people, there is practically no privileged class, and the whole people stand on the same footing. Individualism and equality among the people are most remarkable. With the exception of the officials, the people belong to either of three classes, the farmers, the artisans and the merchants. But the number of farmers is very limited; the artisans are not prosperous, industry not having been at all developed; and therefore the only ruling class is that of the merchants. The desire of accumulating wealth by carrying on trade is thus the general sentiment of the people. As a rule, the Chinese are extremely wealthy, the riches accumulated by generations having reached an enormous aggregate; and this is proved by the fact that the merchants derive their capital from the investments of Chinese high officials and the numerous millionaires throughout the country. The consequence is that the purchasing power of the country is well nigh unlimited. A country such as China, with a population of 400,000,000 wealthy inhabitants, and with the fully developed intermediary of honest merchants as hitherto set forth, affords to the world a market as attractive as can be desired.

Should the commercial interest be the most important of all international interests, as I have already argued, there is only one course to be pursued in regard to the settlement of the present Chinese question, and that is the policy of maintaining the independence and integrity of the Chinese Empire with its door wholly open to the commerce of the world. Opinions have often

been expressed to the effect that China is doomed to lose its independence sooner or later. People, it is said, in that Empire are not fit to govern themselves, and if they were left to manage their internal affairs the whole country would become the hotbed of all sorts of dangers threatening the progress of the civilization of the world. Therefore, the country must either be placed under the protectorate or the *condominium* of the civilized Powers.

Let us ask ourselves if this proposal of placing the Chinese Empire under the protectorate of several Powers would be a satisfactory settlement of the Far Eastern question. Although the *condominium* or the protectorate principle has often been put into execution, it has never failed to prove that the protectorate system is only a temporary solution of the question, and that it invariably leads to a more difficult situation than before. Everybody's business is nobody's business, as the Irish car-driver said when a tourist asked him why a very unpopular landlord had never been shot at. The whole arrangement may easily collapse into a deplorable condition of negligence. Or, on the contrary, it is more probable that it may lead to the ascendancy of one particular Power that might dare to push itself forward in defiance of any remonstrances from the others. This would certainly not be the arrangement we sincerely desire. Let us, then, suppose that China should be divided among the Powers. If one supposed for a moment that any Power would be able to govern easily its own acquired territory, one would be greatly in error. Besides the difficulty in understanding the language, the manners and customs of the people, as already stated, there would arise numberless unexpected troubles.

There is one very clear instance of the difficulty of governing the Chinese. It is our own experience in the Island of Formosa. This island was ceded to Japan by the Chinese Government after the recent war between the two countries. It is now five years since we acquired this island; but constant disturbances have arisen there, caused by the native rebels, in spite of the strenuous efforts made by the Japanese Government toward the restoration of order and peace in that island. It may be remarked that the Japanese are not good colonisers, but at the same time they are in a better position than any other nation for knowing and understanding the Chinese. And the natives of Formosa are not better fighters than the Chinese on the opposite mainland. The state



of things in Cuba also tends to show that to govern a conquered people is no easy task. Even if we took it for granted that these difficulties could be easily surmounted, the partition of China would produce numerous other undesirable results. Each Power, when once it became the actual master of its respective sphere of influence, would naturally rule its territory according to its own ideas. By this means China would be divided into a group of different countries, with their own laws, their own different administrations, the preferential rates of customs duties on imported merchandise, etc. The whole Empire would become the scene of violent rivalries and competition. That would be a state of war under the mask of peace. This is by no means a desirable solution of the problem.

If we seriously consider the extreme difficulty with which the Powers are at present confronted, and also the inconceivable sacrifice of blood and treasure that might possibly be required to carry out the proposed partition of China, even the strongest Power in the world would shrink from inaugurating the daring policy of the dismemberment of that immense Empire. Even after the continuous victories of the Japanese army in the recent war with China, they would never have dared to enter Peking unless they were 100,000 strong. This single instance will suffice to show the difficulty of confronting a determined foe. When the whole population of China, deeply imbued with the utmost hatred of foreigners, once stood determined to uphold their country against foreign aggression, even the largest available forces that the Powers might bring together would hardly be able to cope with the crisis.

These difficulties are clearly understood by the German Emperor. His Majesty, addressing the men of the First and Second Battalions of Marines, on the eve of their departure for China, said:

"You will meet a foe who is not less vallant than yourselves. Trained by European officers, the Chinese have learned to use European weapons."

Thus the protectorate arrangement is not satisfactory, and the partition of the Empire would not improve the situation. Then the only remaining policy is that of maintaining the independence and integrity of China. The policy of the Open Door in China was originated by England, and Lord Salisbury has repeatedly

declared in Parliament that Her Majesty's Government covets no territorial expansion in China. The United States of America, indorsing this policy of the British Government, went further than that; and in September, 1899, they proposed that the Powers should make a declaration guaranteeing the freedom of trade in China. In order to explain the views of the United States Government on this subject, I quote here a few paragraphs from the official dispatch, bearing date of September 22, 1899, addressed to Lord Salisbury by the Honorable Joseph Choate, the American Ambassador to Great Britain. He says:

"He (the President of the United States) understands it to be the settled policy and purpose of Great Britain not to use any privileges which may be granted to it in China as a means of excluding any commercial rivals, and that freedom of trade for it in the Empire means freedom of trade for all the world alike. Her Majesty's Government, while conceding by formal agreement with Germany and Russia the possession of spheres of influence or interest in China, in which they are to enjoy special rights and privileges, particularly in respect to railroads and mining enterprises, has, at the same time, sought to maintain what is commonly called 'the Open Door policy' to secure to the commerce and navigation of all nations equality of treatment within such spheres. The maintenance of this policy is alike urgently demanded by the commercial communities of our two nations, as it is justly held by them to be the only one which will improve existing conditions, enable them to maintain their positions in the markets of China and extend their future operations."

Touching on the subject of the maintenance of the integrity of China, Mr. Choate goes on to say:

"It is the sincere desire of my Government that the interests of its citizens may not be prejudiced through exclusive treatment by any of the controlling Powers within their respective 'spheres of interest' in China, and it hopes to retain there an open market for all the world's commerce, remove dangerous sources of international irritation and thereby hasten united action of the powers at Peking to promote administrative reforms, so greatly needed for strengthening the Imperial Government and maintaining the integrity of China, in which it believes the whole Western world is alike concerned. It believes that such a result may be greatly aided and advanced by declarations by the various powers claiming 'spheres of interest' in China as to their intentions in regard to the treatment of foreign trade and commerce therein, and that the present is a very favorable moment for informing Her Majesty's Government of the desire of the United States to have it made on its own part."

After stating the reasons why the United States Government believes that both Russia and Germany will co-operate in such an understanding as is there proposed, the dispatch further says:

"It is needless also to add that Japan, the power most largely interested in the trade of China, must be in entire sympathy with the views here expressed and that its interests will be largely served by the proposed arrangements, and the declarations of its statesmen within the last year are so entirely in line with it, that the co-operation of that power is confidently relied upon."

The attitude of the two great Powers which have the largest share of interests in China is thus to maintain the integrity of the Empire and the policy of the "Open Door" in that country.

The peaceful policy of Russia needs little explanation. The Emperor's earnest desire for peace was shown to the whole world by his recent manifesto calling together the Peace Conference at The Hague. It is also clear that the policy of France cannot be otherwise than on the same lines as that of the other Powers. In the French Chamber, on the 3d of July, M. Delcassé, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, put forth the views entertained by his Government on the present question. He is reported to have made the following declaration:

"The Chamber will remember that during the past two years I have repeatedly stated that France, as mistress of Indo-China, has no interest in provoking or desiring the break up of China, which is perhaps without sufficient reflection spoken of. What I can affirm is that France has no wish for war with China, but she cannot evade the duty of protecting her citizens and of obtaining for her merchants the guarantees obtained by others. It is for this and this alone that the Government has taken the measures necessitating a credit of 3,350,000 francs for the Chinese expedition. France is certainly anxious for the maintenance of the equilibrium in the Far East."

Germany stands also on the same lines, and this has been solemnly declared by no less a person than the German Emperor in his emphatic speech at Wilhelmshaven. His Majesty said:

"The Russians, the English, the French, or whoever they may be, they are all fighting for the same cause—which is that of civilization."

In dealing with the Chinese it is most important to show them that the Powers are acting in full concert, and that they are absolutely determined to carry out their work of suppressing the rebels, and also that they have no aggressive intention as to territory, unless they are forced by dire necessity to protect their respective interests.